

# The Status Report

February 2010 |

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## Unsung Heroine Event to Be Held May 19 Nomination Deadline Extended to March 12

The MCSW will host its 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Unsung Heroines of Massachusetts celebration on May 19<sup>th</sup> at the State House. The commission will be honoring 100 Unsung Heroines from communities across the Commonwealth. "We are looking for women who don't make the news, but truly make a difference in their communities," noted Helen Corbett, MCSW Chairwoman.

"Unsung Heroines are women who make our neighborhoods, towns and cities better places to live and to work. They are the mentors, volunteers, helpers and innovators who do what needs to be done without expectations of recognition or gratitude. These women are the glue that keeps a community together and every community has them. With our Unsung Heroine celebration, we want to honor these amazing women and say 'Thank you for all you do!'"

The MCSW is seeking nominees for these awards. Anyone may nominate one or more women to be considered by the Selection Committee. The deadline for submitting nominations has been extended to March 12. Nomination forms are available for download on the MCSW website at [www.mass.gov/women](http://www.mass.gov/women).

A Selection Committee will review all nominations and choose the 100 Unsung Heroines of 2010. Selected honorees will be contacted and invited to attend a ceremony and reception in their honor at the Massachusetts State House, Great Hall on May 19<sup>th</sup>. The ceremony will be emceed again this year by Liz Brunner from Channel 5 News.

The costs of the celebration are underwritten through private contributions from business and individuals to the MCSW Trust Fund. No tax dollars are used. The MCSW is seeking additional sponsors to help offset this year's costs. If you, your business or organization would be interested in being one of our 2010 sponsors, please contact the MCSW at 617-626-6520 or email [mcsww@state.ma.us](mailto:mcsww@state.ma.us).

*They don't make the news...  
they make the difference.*



### MCSW Joins Facebook

In October, 2009, the MCSW joined Facebook to expand its capacity to communicate with women from across the state. MCSW has over 150 fans thus far and is expected to become a key part of distributing current information on upcoming public hearings, news articles, research and surveys.

The MCSW Facebook page will also include listings of upcoming events and legislative actions on specific bills the MCSW is supporting and tracking. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to become a MCSW fan on Facebook!

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# MCSW Testifies before the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Commission Urges Level Funding for FY2011

Helen Corbett, Chairwoman of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, submitted the following testimony to the legislature's Joint Committee on Ways and Means at the committee's public hearing on March 2 at Bristol Community College in Fall River:

"On behalf of the full commission, I would like to express our thanks to you for the opportunity to present testimony to this committee. As you are aware, the MCSW is an independent state agency that was legislatively created in 1998 to provide a permanent, effective voice for the women of the Commonwealth. The MCSW strives to advance women to full equality in all areas of life and to promote their rights and opportunities. We are nonpartisan with appointing authority shared by: the Governor, the Senate President, the Speaker of the House, and the Caucus of Women Legislators. The 19 Commissioners represent the diverse racial, ethnic, age and socio-economic backgrounds of the Commonwealth and work together toward the improvement of the status of women in society. The Commissioners are not compensated for their service.

"Today the Commission is requesting that our budget be at the very least level funded for FY2011 as we sustained drastic cuts last year that have the commission operating on a bare-bones status at the present time.

"The MCSW has managed over the past 10 years to perform most of its work by raising trust funds from private companies and individual contributions and by partnering with colleges and organizations to subsidize our efforts. The state funding supplied staff support and office operations funding. In FY2009, we leverage a relatively small state budget, \$252,634, to serve the 3,320,153 Massachusetts women and their families. That same year, in an effort to be helpful in cost cutting efforts, the MCSW actually voluntarily returned part of our budget to the state.

"We understand that, like every agency and commission across the board, the deep cuts we sustained in the 2010 budget were necessary and appropriate given the realities of the state's decreased revenue. The commission's budget was reduced by 72%. This was a drastic reduction from \$252,634 down to \$70,000 created a daunting challenge but we have worked hard to meet it.

"We worked to find ways to operate within our smaller budget and still get the job done. We wanted you to be aware of our efforts to that end:

- We have retained only one staff person and eliminated our three support staff persons.

- Our 19 volunteer commissioners stepped up to take on tasks previously done by staff.
- The commissioners have also volunteered their time to assist with office coverage.
- Our office remains open and operating three rather than five days per week.
- We returned large office equipment and a number of computers to reduce overhead costs.
- Commissioners no longer receive full reimbursement for travel or parking expenses.
- Our one remaining staff person, Director Jill Ashton, manages the office and oversees the intern & volunteers program. We are reaching out to college and universities to expand our for-credit intern program.

"Commissioners have annually raised money for our MCSW Trust Fund to underwrite our research and outreach efforts when needed.

- We increased our fundraising efforts and use trust fund money to underwrite our efforts when needed, as we have done in the past.
- We kept our online Mass. Women's Information Network (MA-WIN) going which is a valuable resource to women across the state.
- We still put out our newsletter "MCSW Status Report" six times per year rather than monthly to our 3,000 person database which includes local and state elected officials.

"In addition, we continued to meet our mandated obligation to conduct public hearings on women's issues, partner with other groups and organizations in mutual causes and track and push for passage of key legislation in this session.

We were able to survive the severe budget cuts of last year because nineteen VOLUNTEER Commissioners from across the Commonwealth have collectively worked hundreds and hundreds of uncompensated hours on MCSW projects. Our one staff person has worked beyond her job description and has secured and directed a college and university intern program which has given students college credits and experience in research, government and women's issues. We collaborated with government agencies, state universities, women's organizations, and local commissions on major research and issue initiatives.

"Commissioners personally raised private funds and donations to underwrite our foundation which pays for the Annual Unsung Heroine State House Ceremony and for the Massachusetts Women's Resource & Referral Network, an online searchable women's resource database that has helped thousands of women annually...at NO cost to taxpayers.

"We understand the severe strains being placed on the state budget but hope that the MCSW will be granted level funding for FY2011. We have analyzed our budget, looking at every penny. With implementing necessary layoffs and making major changes to our FY10 goals, we still sustained the important work the MCSW is mandated by law to accomplish. It meant we had to do more with less, but that's what we have done in the past and are prepared to do moving forward.

"We have done everything possible to keep the MCSW in operation in spite of minimal funding. Our concern today is that should the legislature make further cuts to the MCSW budget in FY2011, choose not to increase or even level fund our operating budget, the MCSW will need to further curtail its operations because there are limits to which volunteer commissioners can be expected to fill the gaps when most have jobs and other responsibilities of their own to fulfill.

"We stand on the shoulders of so many women in US history who faced far more daunting challenges than budget cuts. We are not deterred and will try our best to meet this challenge but we need your support now. We look forward to working with you in any way you deem helpful to advance women's issues across the Commonwealth. Thanks to your past support and the volunteerism of the commissioners, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is ready, willing and able to help." Chairwoman Corbett also submitted an outline of accomplishments over its 10 years of existence (1998-2010) which included:

#### **FULFILLING THE MANDATE OF MA CHAPTER 138: MCSW DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Tracked, researched and supported legislation which advances the rights of women and their families
- Conducted public hearings across the state to collect and hear testimony from constituents in all geographic areas specific to women's issues and concerns which become part of the MCSW Annual Report to our appointing authorities (the Governor, Speaker of the House, Senate President and Caucus of Women Legislators)
- Established and continue to manage the Massachusetts Women's Resource & Referral Network, an online searchable women's resource database (NO tax dollars expended- secured and utilized our foundation donations)
- Developed and continue to host the Massachusetts Annual Unsung Heroine event, spotlighting remarkable women from all Massachusetts communities. (Using NO tax dollars expended- secured and utilized our foundation donations)

#### **PARTNERING WITH OTHERS TO ADVANCE THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN MASSACHUSETTS**

- Assisted in establishing local women's commissions in the Berkshires, Bristol County and the Cape & Islands and currently support the Essex County Women's Commission Bill pending in the legislature.
- Key participants on the Steering committee of MassGAP to increase women appointments in government
- Published "How to Get Appointed to State Boards and Commissions" to help women pursue issue area interests in government service.
- Published "Handbook for New & Emerging Women's Commissions"
- Hosted regional public hearings across the state in cooperation with area legislators
- Collaborations with Caucus of Women Legislators to host "Bringing Women to the Table", pairing women leaders with women legislators  
Established and manage a for-credit college intern program for students from Massachusetts colleges and universities, nurturing the next generation of leaders in public service, research and government.
- Supported and assisted other groups and organizations' efforts and events: Massachusetts Women Veterans Day, Massachusetts Women's Bar Association,

#### **PROVIDING QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE DATA AND RESEARCH ON WOMEN IN THE COMMONWEALTH TO LEGISLATORS AND THE COMMUNITY:**

- "Real Cuts, Real People" report, collaboration with the MA Budget & Policy Center
- Funded "Women in the Down Economy: Impacts of the Recession and the Stimulus in Massachusetts" (to be release March, 2010) in collaboration with the Research and Strategic Initiatives, University of Massachusetts Boston and the Center for Women in Public Policy, UMass Boston McCormack Graduate Center. (NO tax dollars expended- MCSW secured and utilized our foundation donations to help underwrite this project)
- "State of Women: A County by County Report on Women and Girls in Massachusetts"
- Women's Issues: "Fact Sheet" series, in collaboration with the Center for Women in Public Policy, UMass Boston McCormack Graduate Center  
"Beyond State Employees: Pay Equity for All Massachusetts Workers", in collaboration in JFK School of Government, Harvard University
- MCSW Annual Reports prepared and submitted to our appointing authorities (Governor, Senate President, Speaker of the House, Caucus of Women Legislators) which include a synopsis of public hearings' testimony and issues as well as recommendations for actions to be taken on behalf of Massachusetts women.



# MCSW and County Commission Hold Public Hearings

## **Bristol County Commission Holds First Public Hearing**

The Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women held its first public hearing in October, 2009 at the Morton Hospital in Taunton. Two topics of particular concern to participants were the rise of domestic violence in the Commonwealth and the need to increase awareness of breast cancer. Bristol Commissioner Ginny Starvish spoke on the breast cancer awareness issue. Bristol Commissioner Denise Hoyt presented information on domestic violence.

Community members who attended the hearing spoke on issues ranging from employment discrimination against women trying to enter traditionally male occupations to the need to generate more jobs in the economy to the consequences of cutbacks in public services.

There was discussion relative to homelessness and the shortcomings in the social welfare systems in dealing with increased numbers of citizens needing services, the rising costs of basic needs and the need to expand educational opportunities for women trying to become economically self-sufficient.

Taunton's only public health nurse, spoke on homelessness and mental illness in Bristol County noting that out of just 12 beds in the Taunton shelter, only 2 or 3 are reserved for women. Additional facts relative to the shortage of services in the area for women and the eligibility restrictions to access the limited existing services was also discussed.

In addition testimony was presented regarding the difficulty for immigrant families in seeking services and bridging a language barrier. Many children in immigrant families need to serve as advocates for their parent who are non-English speaking.

The Bristol Commission intends to hold future hearings and welcomes interested women in Bristol County to get involved with the new commission.

## **MCSW's Regional Public Hearing in Plymouth**

One of MCSW Regional Public Hearings for 2010 was held in Plymouth in January at the Plymouth South High School.

Commissioners heard testimony from many individuals representing South Shore organizations who spoke on substance abuse, alcohol and drug abuse prevention, responding to poverty in local communities, providing services to low-income women, mental health concerns. Special thanks to Patricia McGilvary of the Marshfield YWCA and Lisa Spencer of the South Shore Community Action Counsel for their thoughtful and informative presentations.

Also attending the Plymouth hearing were State Representatives Vincent deMacedo, Thomas Calter and representatives from the offices of State Senator Therese Murray and US Senator John Kerry.

## **MCSW's Next Regional Public Hearing: March 31 at 6 pm. Pollard Memorial Library Lowell**

Interested parties should contact the MCSW at 617-626-6520 or at [mcsw@state.ma.us](mailto:mcsw@state.ma.us)

## **The Bristol County Commission's Second Hearing to be Held in March**

The BCCSW will hold its second Public Hearing on Tuesday, March 30, 2010, from 7pm-9pm.

The hearing will be held at Family Services Association, 101 Rock Street in Fall River. During the hearing there will also be a presentation on Tips on Negotiating Your Salary.

## **MCSW Advocates for Comparable Work Bill, Bill Receives Favorable Committee Report, Moves Forward**

The MCSW has worked hard this year to move the Comparable Work Bill S689 H1880 towards passage. The joint Labor and Workforce Committee reported the bill with a favorable recommendation last week, giving renewed optimism for passage by the full legislature this year.

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women's legislative priority for the 2009-2010 session is pay equity, an issue that affects the economic status of Massachusetts women at all levels of income and education. In 2009 women in Massachusetts earned, on average, just 76 cents for every dollar earned by men. A bill currently in the Legislature's Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, "An Act Further Defining Comparable Work" has the potential to make strides toward closing the gender wage gap in Massachusetts. The legislation, sponsored by Senator Patricia Jehlen and Representative Alice K. Wolf, would further define comparable work in the Massachusetts Equal Pay Act (MEPA) to allow for the comparison of non-identical jobs requiring similar levels of skill, expertise and training.

With the enactment of MEPA in 1945, Massachusetts became the first state to adopt legislation to protect women from wage discrimination. MEPA forbade the practice of paying male and female employees differently for comparable work. On paper, the law represented a radical shift from state-sanctioned discrimination towards equality, but an important detail prevented MEPA from being effective: the term "comparable" was not defined, rendering the legislation useless in protecting most women from pay discrimination.

In the 1989 discrimination case *Jancey vs. School Committee of Everett*, female public-school cafeteria workers in Everett, MA sued the school committee for pay discrimination after discovering that they were being paid about half of the school's male janitors' hourly wages.

A lower-court judge ruled in favor of the cafeteria workers, citing comparable working conditions and responsibilities between the two groups. He found that both the cafeteria workers and janitors were exposed to extreme heat and cold, both had to lift up to fifty pounds and performed duties requiring a similar level of skill. However, the ruling was overturned by the state supreme court which disagreed with the lower court's finding that the cafeteria workers and janitors performed comparable work. As the law stood in 1989 and remains today, the cafeteria workers and janitors would have to perform nearly identical duties for the cafeteria workers to prove that they had been illegally discriminated against.

## **MCSW Legislative Update**

In past decades women have been paid less than men because of blatant, unrepentant and lawful discrimination. Although women are now offered some legal protections from discrimination and prejudices about women in the workplace have lessened, female workers across all occupations and skill levels continue to be paid less than men.

An Act Further Defining Comparable Work will ensure that employers are held accountable for paying employees fairly based upon a gender-blind assessment of a job's required training, responsibility and working conditions.

### **MCSW Participates in Paid Sick Leave State House Day of Action**

In January, MCSW staff participated in a paid sick leave day of action at the State House. MCSW teamed up with other members of the Massachusetts Paid Sick Leave Coalition to distribute a packet to legislators containing information about the positive effect paid sick leave would have on public health in Massachusetts.

The day of action was meant to build support for the proposed legislation H1805, S688 "An Act Establishing Paid Sick Days". The bill, which would require employers to provide paid sick leave to workers in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, is currently before the legislature's Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development.

"An Act Establishing Paid Sick Days" would allow full-time workers to earn up to seven paid sick days each year. Currently over 40% of private sector employees have no paid sick days; these workers are unable to take care of their own health needs, sick children or elderly relatives without losing valuable income.

This bill would also protect victims of domestic violence and sexual assault by providing paid leave for days spent participating in criminal or civil court proceedings, obtaining medical care or relocating. Currently, between 25 to 50% of all domestic violence victims lose their jobs as the result of abuse; ensuring access to paid leave would assist many victims of domestic violence who have been forced to choose between their personal safety and their livelihood.

Paid sick days save employers' money and boost productivity by preventing "presenteeism," the common—and costly—practice of employees coming into work while too sick to be productive. Sick workers are not only less effective workers; they may also spread their illness to their co-workers.

## MCSW Welcomes New Commissioners



On September 17, 2009, Hanishi Thanawalla Ali of Westborough was appointed by Governor Deval Patrick to serve as an MCSW Commissioner through October 31, 2011. The Commission is excited to welcome Ms. Ali along with all of the knowledge and experience she is already bringing to MCSW.

Hanishi is an attorney, with specialties in immigration and international business law. In addition to working as an attorney, she also volunteers with a number of community organizations including Maithri, a South Asian women's support group which she founded in 2006, the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts in Massachusetts, and serves on the Board of Directors for Respond, Inc., New England's first domestic violence support organization. Hanishi graduated with Honors from Ohio Wesleyan University, earning two Bachelor of Arts degrees, one in Journalism, and one in Economics Management before earning her law degree from the University of Edinburgh, where she later served on the Faculty of Law.

Hanishi also interned at the highly distinguished International Commission of Jurists in Geneva, Switzerland, where she had the opportunity to attend the United Nations Sub-Commission Conference on Human Rights and performed legal research on related human rights issues. She is a welcome addition to the Commission and will surely serve well the interests of women and girls of the Commonwealth.



MCSW is pleased to announce the appointment of our newest commissioner, Ms. Carmen Arce-Bowen of East Boston. Ms. Arce-Bowen was appointed by the Governor on February 4<sup>th</sup> and brings a wealth of experience to the Commission.

Ms. Arce-Bowen currently works with PPI/ONE Massachusetts conducting outreach and bilingual training events in communities of color and ethnic communities across the state. She is also instrumental in several civic engagement initiatives, including the Civic Education for New Americans initiative, the Ya Es Hora coalition, and MassVote. In addition, she serves on the board of Chelsea Collaborative and Emerge Massachusetts and volunteers her time as a youth mentor at Excel Academy Charter School in East Boston.

Ms. Arce-Bowen holds a Bachelor of Laws from Universidad Panamericana, a Master of Laws from Suffolk Law School, where her focus was in Immigration Law, and a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, focusing in International Development in Social and Political Change. The Commission enthusiastically welcomes Carmen and all of the experience and dedication she will bring to our mission of improving the lives of women and girls in the Commonwealth.

## MCSW Seeks Summer Interns

The MCSW welcomes college and graduate students to intern for course credits! If you, or someone you know is looking for an engaging and gratifying internship opportunity please forward a letter of intent and resume to [mcsw@state.ma.us](mailto:mcsw@state.ma.us). The following internships are available:

### Legislative Advocacy

Researching and monitoring state and national legislation that affects women; Supporting activities of the MCSW's Legislative Committee

### Website Design

Creating and implementing new design for MCSW's website; maintaining website with updates and edits

### Program and Planning

Assisting with the coordination of public hearings and regional councils; Supporting activities of the Program and Planning Committee

### MA Women's Resource & Referral Network

Updating & augmenting the MCSW's referral database

### Fundraising

Researching potential sources of funding; Grant writing; Special events planning

### Communications/Publications

Writing & distributing press releases and media advisories, updating and/or creating media lists, and obtaining media coverage; Assisting with the Commission's monthly newsletter and Web site; Updating the Commission's printed materials

## Upcoming Events

### Center for Women and Work 12th Annual Gathering at the Well Forum Presents: "Gray Hairs, Golden Opportunities: Older Women and Work that Matters"

Thursday, April 8, 2010 8:30am-12:30pm  
Sloan Center on Aging and Work, Boston College

Featuring Speakers:  
Margaret Morganroth Gullette, Ph.D.  
Women's Studies Research Center,  
Brandeis University  
and  
Marcie Pitt-Catsoupes, Ph.D.

\$25 donation encouraged, students free

### 13th Annual International Women's Day Breakfast

Friday, March 5, 2010, 7:30am-9:30am  
Simmons College, Linda K. Paresky Conference Center, Flr 3  
300 Fenway  
Boston, MA 02115-5820  
Green Line E Train MFA Stop

Suggested donation \$5 includes continental breakfast  
Audience: teens (ages 13-18), college students, adults

### Women Fighting For Economic and Social Justice: A Celebration of Margaret Fuller's Legacy

March 8, 2010, 5:30-7:30  
City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway, Cambridge, 2nd floor

Presented by the Cambridge Women's Heritage Project, the panel discussion will link Margaret Fuller's legacy to the activist work of several Cambridge women today.

Featuring:  
Joan von Mehren,  
Author of Minerva and the Muse, The Life of Margaret Fuller

Bishnu Pariyar,  
Founder of Empowering Dalit Women of Nepal

Patricia Monte,  
Executive Director, Centro Presente

### 2010 Hampshire College Civil Liberties and Public Policy Reproductive Justice Conference April 9-11, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA

Features more than 50 workshops and trainings for activists of all ages, and speakers who work across the spectrum of social justice in the areas of health care, environmental justice, LGBTQ rights and racial equality.

Conference is free\*, and includes meals, and childcare\*\*.

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged, please visit the Civil Liberties and Public Policy website to register or for more information.

<http://clpp.hampshire.edu/projects/conference/2010/registration>

\*housing/transportation not included

\*\*pre-registration required by March 26th if in need of free on-site childcare

### Stonewall Communities Lifelong Learning Institute Presents:

#### "Sex and Gender in the City: From Lesbian Feminists in the 70's to LBTQ's Today, A Dialogue Across Generations"

Saturday, March 20th 9:30am-4:30pm  
Wheelock College Brookline Campus,  
43 Hawes Street, Brookline

Fee: \$45; \$15 for students  
(includes refreshments, lunch, reception)  
Scholarships available, volunteers needed

#### "War, States and Women's Activism: A Conversation Between Two Historians"

March 11, 2:50-4:30pm  
440 Egan Research Center,  
Northeastern University,  
360 Huntington Ave, Boston MA

Features Northeastern Professors Christina Gilmartin, author and expert on modern China, and Laura Frader, specialist on women and gender history of modern Europe.



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